



GULF STATES AND ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA: VARIATION IN RESPONSES AND POLICIES

Written By: Sinem Cengiz, Nesibe Hicret Battaloglu and Farah Al Qawasmi



Executive summary

The Israeli-led war on Gaza has presented varied responses from the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. On a political level, the GCC States displayed evident variations in their responses that stem from their historical context, governmental, and domestic policies towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, on a humanitarian level, the six states demonstrate a more unified approach to the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe, and to the escalation of the tensions on the region as a whole. This report offers the reader with a wide spectrum of responses from the GCC States while highlighting a number of fundamental factors:

1. Significant variation in roles and policies among the GCC States are reflected in their differing levels of engagement in the Gaza war.
2. Despite their diverse stances regarding Hamas, the GCC states have adopted similar soft power tools, such as mediation and humanitarian aid to deescalate the war.
3. Strong division in responses between the GCC states that had normalized and not normalized relations with Israel. Yet, it would not suffice to categorize the GCC states solely within two groups, normalizers, and non-normalizers, as their responses varied within these each group.
4. The influence of the international actors, particularly the U.S., shaped the scale of the GCC States' responses.
5. On the regional level, the concerns over the potential spillover effects of the Gaza war have significantly unified the GCC States' strategies throughout the war, particularly the diplomatic engagement with Iran.
6. Domestic pressures and the political environment within each GCC state have shaped state rhetoric throughout the discourse of the war.
7. Although all the GCC states are unified on the plan for a two-state solution, the future of the Gaza Strip remains uncertain. Potential strategic plans for its political scene and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip could fundamentally foster a unified stance among the GCC, or further exacerbate divisions among them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
STATE-LEVEL AND DOMESTIC-LEVEL RESPONSES	4
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	5
State of Qatar	6
United Arab Emirates (UAE)	7
State of Kuwait	8
Kingdom of Bahrain	9
Sultanate of Oman	10
HUMANITARIAN AID AND EVACUATIONS	11
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	12
State of Qatar	12
United Arab Emirates (UAE)	13
State of Kuwait	13
Kingdom of Bahrain	14
Sultanate of Oman	14
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION	16
TABLES	11
Table 1: Variations in GCC States' Approaches to Israel, Hamas, and the Two-State Solution.....	
.....	
Table 2: GCC States' Humanitarian Aid to Gaza and Evacuation Efforts	15
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	18

INTRODUCTION

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have responded to Israel's war on Gaza unevenly depending on their political approach to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, relations with Israel, and their domestic national interests and considerations. While all the GCC states have called for an immediate end to the war on Gaza, and have all engaged in both diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to ease the conditions of the people suffering from the repercussions of the war, their individual responses varied. Official statements from the GCC States and their level of diplomatic and humanitarian engagement reveal their positions on the ongoing war. Within the GCC, there are two groups of states: Normalizers and Non-Normalizers with Israel. The former group consists of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, which signed the Abraham Accords to normalize relations with Israel in 2020 under the auspices of former U.S. President Donald Trump. The second group consists of the rest of the GCC states that play varying degrees of engagement in their efforts to end the war in Gaza that has been dragged on since a year now.

It is safe to say that the war on Gaza has not diplomatically provoked the relationship between any of the GCC States with Israel; however, it did restrict a number of regional agreements. The U.S.-led 'Mega-deal', which is a deal between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the U.S. and Israel, was to be considered the largest historical agreement of the region if signed. The '[Mega-deal](#)' is composed of three main factors: a. normalized relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, b. defense and trade agreements between Saudi Arabia and the U.S., and finally, c. prospects of an independent Palestinian State. Negotiations on the agreement were put on hold at the onset of the Gaza genocide, as one of the main components of the war tackles the question of a two-state solution amongst Palestine and Israel. As for the components of Abraham Accords, which include both diplomatic and commercial agreements with the normalizing states, the war on Gaza did not influence existing agreements between Israel and the UAE, however, the same cannot be said about the agreements between Bahrain and Israel.

This report traces the positions of the six GCC States of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman towards that Gaza war that broke out on October 7, 2023. In addition, the report compiles all governmentally announced aid that was sent by the GCC to the besieged Gaza Strip. Furthermore, it combines information from governmental and nongovernmental organizations and charities that have announced their donation sums on their official platforms or via media sources. Surveying this data is vital, as it demonstrates an important element of GCC states' crisis response and its effectiveness in the region, while considering the regional instability and regional political dynamics. Finally, this report paves the way for further research on the topic and most importantly, on the effectiveness of foreign aid in times of crisis.

STATE-LEVEL AND DOMESTIC-LEVEL RESPONSES

This section of the report analyzes the state- and domestic-level responses of the GCC states towards the war Gaza. The state-level analysis represents the national policies and rhetoric of the decision-makers in the state, while the domestic-level analysis represents the relationship between state and society. The distinction here is quite rigid, by separating state and domestic level, the report aims to demonstrate the diplomatic statements made by the GCC states, by briefly touching upon their relations with Israel to better understand the delicate position they are in, and what sort of domestic reaction has been displayed in each GCC state. The domestic societal reaction has been determinative in some GCC states, putting a significant pressure on the decision-makers in shaping their rhetoric during the war. This difference is also due to that specific state's domestic political environment and level of space it provides to its people to express their views on streets or in social media. Even though GCC states lack a robust civil society that could influence the state-level policies, during the Gaza war the decision-makers have tried to navigate between domestic and state-level pressures to maintain both internal cohesion and regional interests.



[Source:](#) The 44th GCC Supreme Council meeting photo (SPA)

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

The Gaza war has posed disquieting challenges for Saudi Arabia. In the wake of the October 7 attacks, Riyadh [called](#) both sides for deescalate the tension, publicly criticizing Israel's actions in Gaza, and blaming it for escalating tensions. This [happened](#) despite talks of normalizing relations between the two countries. Throughout the war, Saudi Arabia has [condemned](#) Israeli attacks on schools and hospitals and has reiterated their support for a two-state solution in line with the 2002

Arab Peace Initiative, which was proposed by the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Suad at the 2002 Arab League Summit. The initiative, which was a new approach to the Arab-Israeli peace, was based on the 1981 Fahd Peace Plan. The Arab Peace Initiative 2002 called for normalized relations with Israel, only after Israel's full withdrawal to the 1967 borders and the creation of an independent Palestinian State in the occupied territories with East Jerusalem as its capital.

As the war intensified, Saudi Arabia accelerated its diplomatic role by leading several political and diplomatic initiatives at regional and global levels to address the situation in Gaza. It played a crucial role in hosting the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) [meeting](#) in October 2023 to establish a unified stance against the Israeli aggression, [and joint Arab League-OIC summit](#) in November 2023 to support Palestinians and break the siege imposed on Gaza. Given its role in the Islamic world, and in the midst of the war, Saudi Arabia played a pivotal role at the Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit, which formed a ministerial committee to lead international efforts aimed at ending the Gaza war, albeit with little impact on the situation on the ground in Gaza. During the war, Saudi Arabia's main goal was to prevent further escalation in the region, and to achieve that, Saudi Arabia engaged with Iran to reduce regional tensions. October 2023, the OIC meeting was important as it was attended by Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who also [held](#) a bilateral discussion with his Saudi counterpart. At the United Nations, as well, Saudi Arabia has made consistent calls for a ceasefire and an [international alliance](#) to establish Palestinian statehood.

Before October 7, Saudi Arabia was engaged in discussions to normalize relations with Israel, a deal that the U.S. was vigorously promoting in exchange for a broader security treaty between Riyadh and Washington. Saudi Arabia's relations with Israel differs significantly from those of other GCC countries. Saudi Arabia sent symbolic military forces during the 1948 war, the 1967 war, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Also, Saudi Arabia's position in the Arab and Muslim world as the custodian of the two holy sites in Islam puts its leadership in an extremely delicate situation when it comes to relations with Israel. While normalizers, Bahrain and the UAE, remained committed to their deals with Israel, the process in the Saudi-Israeli normalization agreement [was halted](#) due to the Gaza war. For Israel, normalization with Saudi Arabia would be a far bigger prize than with UAE or any of the other GCC states, precisely due to the Kingdom's religious significance, as well as its economic and political clout. If Saudi Arabia were to normalize with Israel, it could potentially influence other majority-Muslim nations like Indonesia and Malaysia could even follow suit. Just weeks before the October attacks, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman [told Fox News](#) that "every day,

we get closer" to normalization, while adding that the deal must ease the lives of Palestinians. The war in Gaza has likely put that process on ice indefinitely. According to a [recent poll](#), 96 percent of Saudis oppose normalization with Israel.

State of Qatar

The Palestinian cause is engraved in the Qatari history and politics. During the genocidal war on Gaza, Qatar cancelled its National Day celebrations and hosted a number of [solidarity rally](#) for the public. The state of Qatar has placed itself at the heart of the mediation efforts of the Gaza War. Qatar's mediation efforts were inevitable, due to the facts that Qatar is an active state in regional and international mediation efforts, and more importantly, Qatar is home to the Hamas Political Bureau office. Qatar [established](#) strong diplomatic ties to the leadership of the political faction of Hamas in 2006, and the latter established a political office in Qatar in 2012. Throughout the years, establishing the Hamas political office in Qatar made it possible for the U.S. and Israel to negotiate with Hamas through Qatari Foreign Ministry.

On October 7, 2023, Qatar was the first Arab state to associate the Hamas led attacks on Israel to the violations of the human rights of the Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the continuous attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, blaming the October 7 attacks solely on Israel. Qatar [called](#) for a de-escalation of the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian factions. Furthermore, In November 2023, a Qatari-led 4-day ceasefire went into effect to allow aid to enter Gaza, as well as a Qatari diplomatic delegation, led by the Minister of State for International Cooperation, [HE Lulwa Al-Khater](#). The ceasefire allowed for the exchange of a number of captives held on both sides, 50 Israeli captives were released, as well as 150 Palestinian prisoners. With the conflict escalating to the West Bank, HE Mohammed Al Emadi, the Ambassador of the Qatar's [Gaza Reconstruction Committee](#) met with Palestinian and international officials to discuss the rising conflict in the region. They further discussed the logistics of the execution of Gaza gas plant to generate energy to the besieged city.



[Source](#): The Peninsula

Moreover, Qatar held numerous meetings in attempt to broker a permanent ceasefire with both regional and international players. Amongst the most prominent meetings was the one [held](#) in Qatar in August 2024 with delegations from the U.S., Egypt and Israel, as well as the head of the Israeli intelligence, David Barnea, and a number of Israeli military officials. The meetings, multiple calls for ceasefires, and UN agency

assemblies, failed to restrain Israel's aggression towards the besieged Gaza. On the contrary, Israel expanded its aggression to neighboring states such as Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Iran. Apprehensive of the possibility of a wider regional war, Qatar held an urgent meeting in September 2024 with a number of GCC Foreign Ministers, as well as the Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Argchi. Putting their differences aside, both the GCC and Iran [presented](#) their intentions to cooperate and prioritize their shared economic, political, and cultural interests for the safety of the region, as well as the need to deescalate the tensions with Israel.

Israel displayed its lack of intention to abide by the peace deals led by Qatar through attacking the Qatar based news media outlet, Aljazeera. It ordered the shutting down of Aljazeera's offices in both Gaza and the West Bank, as well as directly assassinating leading journalists that work there. With the continuous abstraction of the mediation efforts by Israel, and the pressure [applied](#) on Qatar by the U.S., Qatar was left with no choice but to reexamine its political role in the conflict. During the first year of the assault on Gaza, the state of Qatar has worked persistently in attempt to secure a ceasefire and arrive at a humanitarian resolution; however, all attempts have failed due to the lack of commitment by the state of Israel. In July 2024, Israel ordered the assassination of the head of Hamas Political Bureau, Ismail Haniyeh in Iran. Qatar strongly [condemned](#) the attack and hosted the funeral of the late general in Doha, which was attended largely by the public. Although Qatar's Foreign Minister stated that they would be reconsidering the role as mediators in the conflict, Qatar has [continued](#) to lead the regional peace initiatives.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

As initial diplomatic reaction following Hamas' attacks in October 2023, the UAE Ministry strongly [condemned](#) the violence, calling it a grave escalation. As early as November 2023, UAE officials expressed criticism of Israel's actions, describing them as "disproportionate". The UAE also [highlighted](#) the failure of Israel's long-standing containment policy towards Palestine and asked for the U.S. involvement for a prompt end of the war. By December 2023, the UAE further solidified its role in pushing for humanitarian efforts, [voting](#) for a UN resolution that demanded an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages, and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza. Further, as a member of the UN Security Council for 2022-23, the UAE also drafted and UN Security Council Resolution 2720, which [called](#) for concrete steps to ensure the flow of aid into Gaza, while also safeguarding the UN and humanitarian workers on ground and adopted by the council.

The UAE's day after plans in Gaza started became evident by January 2024. Abu Dhabi may be considering Mohammed Dahlan as a key figure in managing Gaza's future governance, particularly within the framework of a revitalized Palestinian Authority (PA); a concept reportedly [backed](#) by the Biden administration. In February 2024, the UAE's ambassador to the United Nations, Lana Nusseibeh, [emphasized](#) that an "irreversible progression" towards a two-state solution was necessary for any regional commitment to Gaza's reconstruction. By July 2024, the UAE had [endorsed](#) the deployment of an international force to establish law and order in Gaza under the Palestinian Authority's control. Additionally, reports indicate that the UAE is working to

form a [national committee](#) of Palestinian leaders and business figures loyal to Dahlan, positioning him as a potential successor to the aging Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Since the beginning of the war, the UAE has tried to [compartmentalize](#) its political and economic relations with Israel. The UAE normalized relations with Israel in 2020 as a part of Abraham Accords. In March 2023, a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the UAE and Israel [entered](#) into force, Israel's first free trade agreement with an Arab state. Emirati leaders continue to defend their relationship with Israel, [arguing](#) that it contributes to regional stability and allows them to provide essential humanitarian aid to those in need, particularly in Gaza. However, the ongoing war in Gaza has strained the economic relationship between the two countries. A [major deal](#), in which BP and a UAE state-owned oil company were in talks to acquire a 50% stake in Israel's largest natural gas producer for \$2 billion, was put on hold due to the perceived risks associated with the conflict.



[Source: AA](#)

Public opinion in and towards the UAE's policies could be one source of pressure since the escalation of Israeli violence in Gaza. A January 2024 [poll on Arab Public opinion](#) revealed that 67% of respondents viewed the UAE's stance on the war negatively. The backlash against the continued relationship with Israel has been reflected in Emirati discourse, with prominent figures such as Professor Abdulkhaleq Abdulla briefly [posting](#), then deleting, a statement calling for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from the UAE. Despite this, the government has largely [sought](#) to contain and control domestic activism, as seen in the suppression of Palestinian solidarity efforts at UAE universities. Additionally, the televised Friday sermon did not mention the Palestinians, and a scheduled solidarity event in Dubai, "Run for Palestine," was reportedly [postponed](#) without explanation.

STATE OF KUWAIT

Kuwait [expressed](#) its "grave concern" over the situation, holding Israel responsible for what it termed "blatant attacks." In a statement, the foreign ministry [called](#) on the international community to "put an end to the provocative actions of the occupation" and to the "policy of expanding settlements." Kuwait firmly [rejected](#) an Israeli order for Palestinians in Gaza to evacuate their homes and move south during the extensive air campaign targeting the territory. Kuwait also used the UN platforms effectively to call for an immediate ceasefire, open of crossings for humanitarian aid and [renew](#) its solidarity with the Palestinian people. Kuwait's Parliament, prior to its dissolution in June, renewed its support to Gaza, rejecting any sort of normalization

with the “[Zionist](#)” entity. Parliament also [approved](#) 13 recommendations to stop the” Zionist violations in the Gaza Strip and support the just cause of the Palestinian people”. The recommendations involve establishing the “Kuwait Humanitarian City” in the Gaza Strip, providing the necessary residential, educational and health facilities to support the steadfastness of the people and prevent their displacement.

In Kuwait, thousands of citizens and residents gathered to protest Israel and show solidarity with Palestinians. Kuwait, despite expelling part of its Palestinian population the 1990s over Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat’s support of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s invasion, has vigorously defended the Palestinian cause and underlined that the country will be the last in the region to normalize with Israel. Kuwait’s more pluralist political life has helped shape its policy. Historically, Kuwait refrained playing a major mediator role in intra-Palestinian disputes and did not publicly advance its own proposals for resolving of Israeli-Palestinian debate. During the period of active GCC-Israeli negotiations (1992-97), Kuwait attended multilateral working group peace talks with Israel, but it neither hosted any sessions of the multilateral talks nor like Qatar and Oman it exchange trade offices with Israel.

Despite its disappointment from the PLO and the attitude of Palestinians during the war era, Kuwait has not cozied up to Israel. Moreover, Kuwaiti-Palestinian relations started to improve in 2004 when Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas formally apologized to Kuwait for some Palestinians’ support to Saddam. The relations further developed after Abbas travelled to Kuwait in 2013 to reopen the Palestinian embassy there, which closed in 1990 after the invasion. Except for Kuwait, other GCC states have also had varying degrees of engagement with Israel, whether through trade, intelligence sharing, or informal dialogues, even if they have not formally established diplomatic ties.

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Since the beginning of the War, the Bahraini government has attempted to poise their political reaction to the crisis, as there is a clear rift between the governmental stance and the stance of the public. During the Middle East Security and Defense Summit in November 2023, the Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, was the first Arab leader to openly condemn Hamas for the October 7 attacks. Al Khalifa [accused](#) Hamas for the killing of over 1000 Israel citizens, and capturing 240 citizens. Shortly after the war, both Bahrain and Israel [recalled](#) their ambassadors, and suspended all economic activity between the two states. It is worthy to note that as of June 2024, trade between Israel and Bahrain had [reached](#) \$54 million. Members of the Bahrain Parliament were the first to [announce](#) freezing economic trade between Bahrain and Israel as of November 2023. Although the Bahraini parliament has no influence over Bahrain’s foreign policy, however, they were determined to state their commitment to the Palestinian cause, and have called for a humanitarian ceasefire. They further [stressed](#) on the importance of returning the Bahraini ambassador to Israel back to the kingdom.

In September 15 2020, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates signed the Abraham Accords, normalizing relations with Israel. By doing so, both Israel and

Bahrain opened embassies, and established commercial agreements with one another. Subsequently, the ratification of the Abraham Accords, a free trade agreement was signed between Bahrain and Israel, in attempt to bolster trade between the two nations. Many Bahrainis rejected the government's signing of the Abraham Accords; hence, the war on Gaza further displayed the resentment that the people of Bahrain hold towards their government for normalizing the Kingdom's relationship with Israel. The Palestinian cause is rooted amongst most Arab nations, and especially in Bahrain. Bahraini people have had a rich history in political activism and joined the so-called 'Arab Spring' in 2011 as the society protested against both political and economic injustices.

Since October 7, multiple [demonstrations](#) took place in Bahrain, with a number of them taking place in front of the Israeli embassy in Manama, calling for putting an end to the normalized relationship between the kingdom and Israel, as well as the end of the Gaza genocide. In addition to the joint trade between the two nations, Bahrain was the first GCC country to sign a bilateral defense agreement with Israel. The defense agreement [embraces](#) industrial development, military relations, and most importantly, intelligence training.



[Source](#): Amwaj.media

Signing the Abraham Accord, and the relationship between Bahrain and Israel that developed prior to that sparked tension between members of the Bahraini Government, as well as highlighting tension between the Bahraini government and the society. Therefore, with the Israeli led genocide on Gaza, Bahrain witnessed three lines of political reactions, first from the Bahraini government, the second from the Bahraini parliament, and the third from the Bahrain public.

SULTANATE OF OMAN

On October 7, the day the Gaza War started, Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement urging Israel to exercise maximum restraint and prioritize the protection of civilians. In a statement, the Foreign Ministry [expressed](#) its concern over the escalation as a result of "continued illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories". Oman has adopted a fiery tone and has been one of the most vocal critics of Israel in the Gaza War.

Diplomatically, official statements reveal that Oman has sustained its pro-Palestinian position during the ongoing war. It is also significant that Oman has not officially condemned Hamas's actions on October 7 or [labeled](#) them as an act of terrorism. Indeed, in November 2024, Oman's Permanent Representative to the Arab League,

Abdullah Al-Rahbi, [said](#) Hamas' Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7 was a result of the "pressure and inhumane practices" that the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Between October 7, 2023- October 6, 2024, Oman MOFA [issued](#) a total of 51 statements on Gaza, denouncing Israeli aggression, reflecting Oman's position in the ongoing war. The statements also reveal Oman has been an active diplomatic actor to forge an international action as the sultanate held a meeting with various global actors. Oman also [rejected](#) any prospect of normalizing relations with Israel akin to the Abraham Accords signed between Israel and Morocco, Bahrain, and the UAE in 2020.

Oman's diplomatic stance on the ongoing War in Gaza hints at a change in the sultanate's foreign policy, often characterized as neutral and mediatory vis-à-vis conflicting parties in the region. Muscat has been a supporter of the Arab-Israeli peace process. Oman was the first GCC State to [host an Israeli delegation](#) that welcomed Israeli Prime Ministers in 1994, 1996, and 2018 under the rule of the late Sultan Qaboos. The change of Omani leadership to Sultan Haitham in 2020 and growing [anti-Israeli and anti-Western public opinion](#) amid the Palestine issue can be two sources of a shift in Oman's foreign policy towards Israel.

GCC States	Position Towards Hamas October 7 Attacks	Normalized Agreement with Israel up to October 7	Approach to the Two-State
Saudi Arabia	<i>No Condemnation</i>	<i>In Progress</i>	<i>Positive</i>
Qatar	<i>No Condemnation</i>	<i>No Official Agreement</i>	<i>Positive</i>
UAE	<i>Condemnation</i>	<i>Signed Abraham Accords</i>	<i>Positive</i>
Kuwait	<i>No Condemnation</i>	<i>No Official Agreement</i>	<i>Positive</i>
Oman	<i>No Condemnation</i>	<i>No Official Agreement</i>	<i>Positive</i>
Bahrain	<i>Condemnation</i>	<i>Signed Abraham Accords</i>	<i>Positive</i>

Table 1: Variations in GCC States' Approaches to Israel, Hamas, and the Two-State Solution (Source: Gulf Studies Center)

HUMANITARIAN AID AND EVACUATIONS

The importance of humanitarian aid in GCC states' foreign policies is underscored by the fact that they are amongst the leading donors for humanitarian aid and humanitarian assistance worldwide. The GCC states have started to play a crucial role in regional and international issues through employing significant soft power elements, such as humanitarian aid and mediation. Although all the GCC states are considered as wealthy states, the main donors are the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, while the other two states, namely Oman and Bahrain, provide minimal aid. In the Gaza war, all GCC states have provided humanitarian aid to the Palestinians

under siege in Gaza. The below section provides a unique analysis of aid provided by each GCC state to Gaza, and the role played by them in terms of humanitarian assistance, in particular the evacuations of people from Gaza. Based on information gathered from various internet sources, the below section outlines the estimated amount of aid provided. However, it is important to note that these figures are approximate and subject to change, as the aid efforts are still ongoing.

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia has delivered substantial humanitarian assistance to Gaza via the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief). In November 2023, during the immediate aftermath of the beginning of the war, KSRelief [provided](#) \$15 million to support UNRWA in the Gaza Strip. Again, in March 2024, Saudi Arabia [provided](#) another \$40 million to the UNRWA towards the agency's humanitarian efforts. Since the conflict erupted on Oct. 7 last year, Saudi Arabia has directly [donated](#) \$185 million as well as 890 tons of supply relief in humanitarian aid to Palestine through the Saudi aid agency KSRelief, Foreign Minister Prince [Faisal bin Farhan told](#) the UN General Assembly. Prince Faisal also noted in his speech on Sept. 28 that Saudi Arabia is working with different UN agencies to raise a total of \$106 billion for reconstruction and humanitarian aid.

On Nov. 23, 2023, KSRelief and the Egyptian Red Crescent signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in aid delivery to Gaza, facilitating the sending of aid by land and air routes. Throughout the war, KSRelief continued [carrying out](#) airdrops of quality food supplies to Palestinians via planes. [Sahem](#), the Saudi fundraising campaign for Gaza, has touted its success in raising more than \$180m from 1.8 million donors, listing on its website the names of donors, including individual businesspeople and the state oil company, Aramco. Donations such as dates, medical supplies and food baskets are also listed on Sahem's website. In September, Saudi Arabia [announced](#) the provision of monthly financial support to Palestinians to help address the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and its surroundings. Saudi Arabia has sent about 60 planes to Gaza relief, carrying tons of aid and medical supplies.

Gaza Health Ministry:

**“
46K deaths,
96K injured, and
thousands missing
”**

STATE OF QATAR

Qatar was amongst the first nations to donate emergency funds to Gaza during the first week of the genocide. Qatar Fund for Development [announced](#) a donation of \$150 million upon the commands of HRH Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad. Furthermore, between October 7, 2023 and October 7, 2024, Qatar Charity donated around QR 114 million to Gaza's relief fund. These funds were [allocated](#) to cash distribution, food, shelter, education, and medical aid. Furthermore, Qatar [donated](#) \$100 million to the UNRWA's humanitarian fund for Gaza. Furthermore, Qatar was keen on sending food

aid items through both the Egyptian crossing of Al-Arish, as well as the Jordanian border [amounting](#) 94 aircrafts carrying over 2000 tons of aid.

In addition to the funds allocated to Gaza, the state of Qatar [evacuated](#) 23 batches of patients requiring urgent medical help along with their families. The total number of patients getting medical treatment in Qatar is [estimated](#) to be around 900. Furthermore, Qatar evacuated around 89 Gazans that hold the Qatari residency, as well as evacuating Al-Jazeera based journalist, and his family, Wael Al Dahdouh, after being repeatedly [targeted](#) by the Israeli military.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In November, the UAE [facilitated](#) the evacuation of 15 Palestinians, including eight children, from Gaza through the Rafah border crossing into Egypt for medical treatment in Abu Dhabi. During the initial months of the war, the UAE has committed significant humanitarian aid to Gaza, including a 150-bed [field hospital](#), a \$20 million emergency aid package, and plans to treat 1,000 Palestinian children in its hospitals. In February 2024, a [floating hospital](#) at Egypt's Al-Arish port began treating injured Gazans. Additionally, the UAE [pledged](#) \$5 million to the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) to support Gaza's reconstruction efforts.

According to official Emirati figures, as of September 2024, the UAE has [evacuated](#) 1,917 patients and family members from Gaza. The country has also delivered over 40,000 tons of aid, including food, medical supplies, and other relief items through a range of efforts, including 10 ships, 1,300 trucks, 316 flights, and 104 airdrops. In March 2024, the first ship carrying 200 tons of food and relief supplies arrived in Gaza, while the "Bird of Goodness" campaign has provided over 3,450 tons of aid to Northern Gaza via airdrops.



[Source](#): WAM

STATE OF KUWAIT

Kuwait announced a contribution of \$ 2 million to UNRWA in support of Palestine Refugees. In addition, Kuwait Society for relief has announced a total [donation](#) of \$16 million to be sent in funds, as well as 550 tons of relief supplies. Kuwait was also instrumental in hosting the [international conference for Gaza](#) where donors pledged more than \$2 billion in aid to the besieged Gaza Strip as Israel continues its ruthless onslaught in the enclave. [62] The conference was organized by the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Kuwait also sent several air ships, prepared by the Kuwait-based KSR (Kuwait Society for Relief) organization, carrying tons of humanitarian aid materials to Gaza. Kuwait has established an air bridge that carried all the relief, humanitarian and medical aid the Palestinians needed, as well as tents for the displaced, with contributions from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and official and charitable organizations. More than 40 humanitarian aid airplanes took off from Kuwait since the beginning of the war. Kuwait's humanitarian charities, such as Kuwaiti Namaa Charity Association [organized](#) Convoys of Goodness" and "Kuwait by Your Side" campaigns.



[Source](#): AlWatan

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

On October 20, 2023, the Bahrain TV organized a National Day of solidarity with the victims of the besieged Gaza. This campaign was held in collaboration with the Royal Humanitarian Fund and the National Committee. Members of the Royal family, including HM Shaikh Hamad Al Khalifa, and Crown prince RH Prince Salman Al Khalifa, [donated](#) over \$8.7 m to the campaign. In addition, the Bahraini public donated around \$911, 000, whereas a number of large Bahraini corporations donated around \$17 million, amounting the Bahraini donations to \$26,611,000. In November 2023, Bahrain evacuated six Bahraini citizens from Gaza, in collaboration with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry; however, it is not evident that Bahrain had [evacuated](#) any local Gazans for medical aid. Furthermore, the Bahraini prominent Humanitarian Agency, Al-Eslah society's KAAF Humanitarian [donated](#) six fully equipped ambulances through the Kingdom of Jordan.

SULTANATE OF OMAN

The Extraordinary GCC Ministerial Council on Gaza was held on October 17 in Oman. The council stressed its support for the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in their homeland and warned against any attempts to displace or transfer them. The council also [announced](#) immediate financial contributions of \$100 million for this relief operation.

On February 11, Oman, under the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, [established](#) an airbridge to deliver relief to Gaza through the Oman Charitable Organization (OCO). On February 26, 2024, the third airbridge was [operated](#), transporting tones of relief, food, and medical supplies to Palestinians in Gaza, coordinated with Oman's embassy in Jordan. As of April 6, 2024, Oman has made significant financial contributions to Palestinian aid via international organizations,

[donating](#) \$3 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and \$1 million to UNICEF to [support](#) children in Gaza. The total [amount of financial aid](#) is estimated to be \$4 million, along with 100 tons of relief supplies. Reportedly, Oman has [sent multiple aid](#) shipments to Palestine via Royal Air Force aircraft through special air bridges. On April 2024, an official statement from the Foreign Ministry [confirmed](#) that several wounded Palestinians affected by the Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip arrived in Oman to receive treatment. The exact number of [evacuated](#) Gazan patients is estimated to be 12 patients and 16 family members.

GCC States	Engagement in Gaza War	Government and Public Humanitarian Aid (Estimated figures)	Evacuations (Patients)
Saudi Arabia	<i>Diplomatic & Humanitarian Support</i>	<i>Financial Aid: \$240 m Relief Aid: 890 tons</i>	None
Qatar	<i>Diplomatic & Humanitarian Support</i>	<i>Financial Aid: \$281.3 m Relief Aid: 2000 tons</i>	900
UAE	<i>Diplomatic & Humanitarian Support</i>	<i>Financial Aid: \$25 m Relief Aid: 40,000 tons</i>	1,917 <i>(patients and family members)</i>
Kuwait	<i>Diplomatic & Humanitarian Support</i>	<i>Financial Aid: \$ 16 m Relief Aid: 550 tons</i>	None
Oman	<i>Diplomatic & Humanitarian Support</i>	<i>Financial Aid: \$4 m Relief Aid: 100 tons</i>	28 <i>(patients and family members)</i>
Bahrain	<i>Diplomatic & Humanitarian Support</i>	<i>Financial Aid: \$26.6 m Relief Aid: 180 tons</i>	None

Table 2: GCC States' Humanitarian Aid to Gaza and Evacuation Efforts (Source: Gulf Studies Center)

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The GCC states have responded to the ongoing Gaza war through various political approaches. Their historical approaches to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, differing levels of relations with Israel, and geopolitical positions have all shaped their reactions. Official statements and levels of engagement, such as aid distribution or hosting diplomatic meetings, reveal how each GCC state has approached the conflict. These actions not only indicate their stance on the conflict, but also reflect their broader strategic priorities and regional alliances.

Analyzing the GCC responses can be done through three levels: the international level, where U.S. relations with GCC States play a significant role; the regional level, which encompasses the war's expansion across the region, involving Iran and Israel; and the domestic level, which considers each GCC state's national interests and priorities.

On the international level, U.S. influence on the GCC states is the main factor affecting the GCC responses as Washington staunchly backed Israeli attacks, keeping pressure on its Gulf allies to restrain their rhetoric during the Gaza war. Historically strong security, political and financial ties between the U.S. and the GCC states have refrained the latter's rhetoric about the U.S. involvement in the war. The U.S. have also leveraged its power in the UNSC and General Assembly in resolutions in favor of Israel, while the GCC states have voted in favor of Palestine and displayed a unified stance despite their varying degree of relations with Israel.

Regionally, the war in Gaza is putting additional pressure on GCC states as the threat of a full-scale regional conflict between Israel and Iran grows. Since the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, former political leader of Hamas, in July 2024 in Iran, direct military escalation between Israel and Iran has become a significant concern for the Gulf monarchies, particularly given their strategic vulnerabilities vis-à-vis Iran, such as the security of oil facilities and transit routes through the Strait of Hormuz. This prompted the GCC states to act together to reassure Iran of their neutrality, officially declaring in October 2024 that they would not allow the United States to use their airbases for military action against Iran.

The domestic level is important in influencing how GCC leaders shape their rhetoric given the carrying degrees of support or opposition among their citizens regarding relations with Israel and approach towards the Gaza war. Historically, the Palestinian cause is deeply rooted in all GCC societies, influencing their view of Israeli attacks on Gaza. However, the impact of the societal-level pressures varies according each state's domestic political space provided by state to its people to practice solidarity rallies and freedom to express their political stance through social media outlets.

At the international and regional level, the war on Gaza have brought the GCC states together to adopt a unifying stance; however, their differing domestic dynamics have been determining their reaction degree, as well as their relations with Israel. This complexity highlights the nuanced variations in GCC politics and each state's approach towards the Gaza war. As a result, GCC States have managed to avoid being part of the Israel's war on Gaza, and have avoided the spillover effects of the war. However, in some cases, the diplomatic relation between the states and Israel differed during the past year. For instance, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the normalized relation with Israel that was well in progress has slowed down due to regional tensions. In the cases of Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE, the war had no influence on their consistent approach to Israel. Consequently, Qatar continued mediating with all parties involved in the war, Kuwait had no relations with Israel before the war, and developed none in the past year, and the UAE continued both their diplomatic and economic engagements with Israel to a certain degree. In the cases of Bahrain and Oman, both countries adopted a sterner approach towards Israel due to domestic pressures.

Beside their diplomatic engagement, and humanitarian aid, all six GCC States are keen to participate in an U.S.-backed peacekeeping force in the Gaza Strip when the war ends. Throughout the year of the war, the GCC States have displayed a variation of political responses to the conflict. However, the success a peacekeeping model in Gaza comes with a number of complex conditions. To begin with, a U.S. backed peacekeeping force would require the assumption that Hamas will no longer govern Gaza, and instead, an Israel/ U.S. approved government is elected to govern the city. Furthermore, the future governing body in Gaza must also be politically supported by all the GCC countries in order for the peacekeeping force to assist in the reconstruction of the besieged city. Accordingly, the GCC States have agreed on partaking in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in the post-war Gaza. It appears that the GCC states, whom navigated the adverse repercussions of the war, aim to exert influence in a post-war Gaza reflecting their varying perceptions of the new Middle East order.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Dr. Sinem Cengiz is a Researcher at Gulf Studies Center of Qatar University in Doha, and Non-Resident Fellow at Gulf International Forum in Washington, D.C. She earned her Ph.D. at the department of Area Studies at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara in 2024, with a dissertation on GCC States' foreign policy-making. Cengiz is the author of the book titled *"Turkish-Saudi relations: Cooperation and Competition in the Middle East"* published by Gerlach Press in 2020, and co-editor of the book titled *"The Making of Contemporary Kuwait: Identity, Politics, and Its Survival Strategy"* by Routledge in 2024. Cengiz is a weekly columnist for Arab News, Saudi Arabia's largest English daily newspaper, since 2016.



Nesibe Hicret Battaloglu is a Researcher at Gulf Studies Center of Qatar University in Doha. Currently, she is also a PhD Candidate at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara. Battaloglu obtained an MA Degree in Gulf Studies at Qatar University with a thesis on Turkey and Iran's soft power in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Her research interests are international relations of the Gulf monarchies, Turkey-GCC relations and identity and foreign policy nexus in the Gulf. Battaloglu is the co-editor of the forthcoming book titled *"The Contemporary United Arab Emirates: From Surviving State to Assertive Power"* by Springer in 2025.



Farah Al Qawasmi is a Researcher at Gulf Studies Center of Qatar University in Doha. She received her undergraduate degree from Georgetown's School of Foreign Service in Doha with a degree in International Politics. She continued her studies at SOAS, the University of London, where she pursued a Master of Science degree in Cooperate Globalization and Development. Her research interests include Water and Food Security, International Affairs, and Foreign Policy of Gulf and MENA region. Al Qawasmi co-edited two books on the Gulf, titled *"Contemporary Qatar: Examining State and Society"* by Springer in 2021, and *"Contemporary Oman: The Sultan, the People and the Legacy of Peace"* by Gerlach Press in 2024.